



A photograph of several kayakers on a pebbly beach. In the foreground, there are several kayaks in various colors (yellow, orange, red, grey) with fishing gear and catches of fish. A person in a blue wetsuit is standing in the shallow water in the background. The sky is overcast.

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO **KAYAK FISHING**

Promoting safe and responsible Kayak fishing

for more information visit
www.swka.org.uk

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO **KAYAK FISHING**

2. Fish finders/Sonar

Technology is getting everywhere these days, that includes modern electronics finding their way onto the fishing kayak.

Fish finders, or sonar, have become an increasingly common site on fishing kayaks over the last few years. Whilst as the name suggest they can be used to locate shoals of fish in reality they are of more use as a 'feature finder', rather than 'fish finder'.

'Fish finders' allow you to see what is under your kayak – what the seabed looks like, how deep the water is, water temperature and of course if there are any fish in the water column.

This guide will show you some of the key features and benefits of using a fish finder.



Introduction



The Dragonfly range is the latest offering from Raymarine, a fish finder that has proven to be very popular with kayak fishing, and is especially popular in SWKA.

The range includes the Dragonfly 4DV up to the 7Pro. The seven models have a variety of product features with the Pro models including Sonar, Downvision, Wifish and even built in GPS.



The Dragonfly is packed with features, and as such has a user manual than runs to nearly 140 pages. We're all guilty of ignoring manuals, but in this case you've paid your money – take some time to read the manual to understand the features and how to access and use them. Once you know how to use your FF this guide will hopefully help you understand what you are looking at and how to get the best out of it whilst out on your kayak ie more fish!

Raymarine Dragonfly





Will a Fish Finder improve my fishing?

In short, YES.

As already mentioned a Fish Finder isn't just that, it has multiple benefits:

- Fish finder
- Feature finder
- Water depth
 - How to setup your tackle ie fishing depth.
 - How much anchor line to let out
- Targeting specific species
- Identifying hazards, ie ghost pots or debris
- Ability to return to the same spot, trip after trip
- Maintain Troll speed (GPS enabled devices)
- Monitor drift speed (GPS enabled devices)

Ultimately giving you a more productive day on the water.

Benefit for kayak fishing



Depth
Reading

Speed

Water
Temperature

Fish

Sea Bed

Depth
Markers



The basics



It may sound obvious but a FF is showing you a sectional view of the water column and sea bed under your kayak.

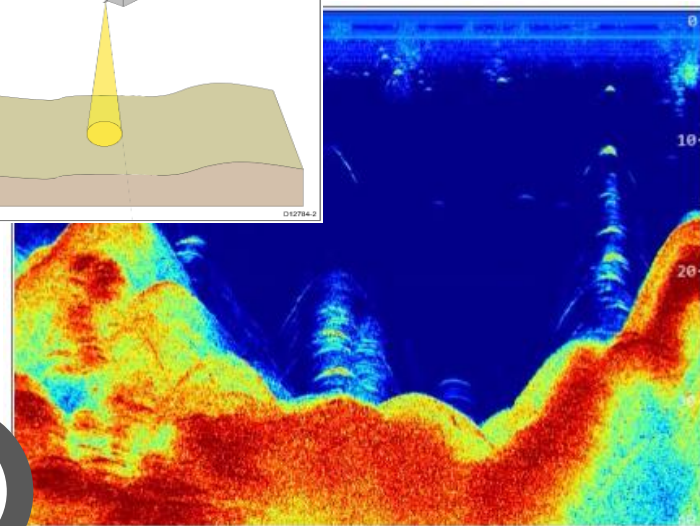
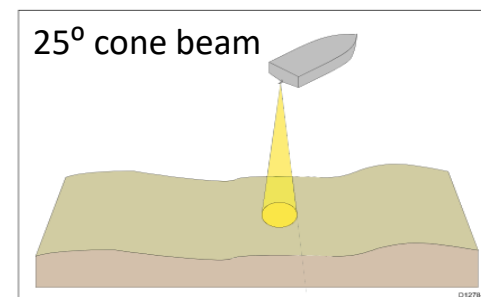
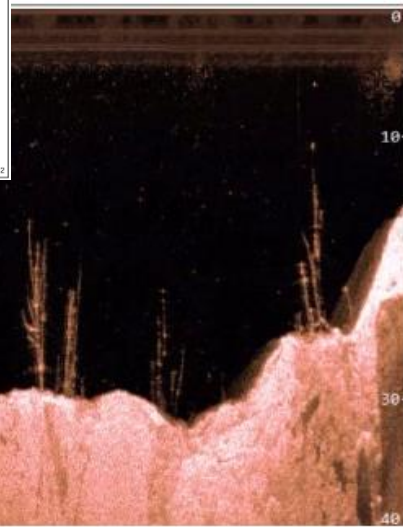
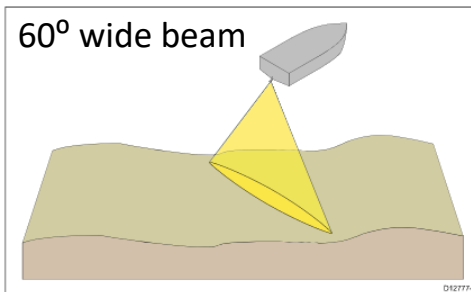
The Dragonfly gives you two options:

- CHIRP DownVision
- CHIRP Sonar

DownVision is a wide angle side to side beam that uses a higher frequency. This will cover the water column directly beneath and to the side of your kayak. This mode produces clear images of the sea bed and structures.

Sonar is a conical shaped beam, covering an area directly under your kayak. This mode produces an image where moving objects ie fish are clearly shown.

Whilst there is some cross-over in the modes the preference is to use DownVision for identifying features and the seabed structure ie where the fish could be. Then using Sonar for identifying fish in the water column. With the Dragonfly you have the choice to view each mode separately or together in split screen.



Sonar v DownVision

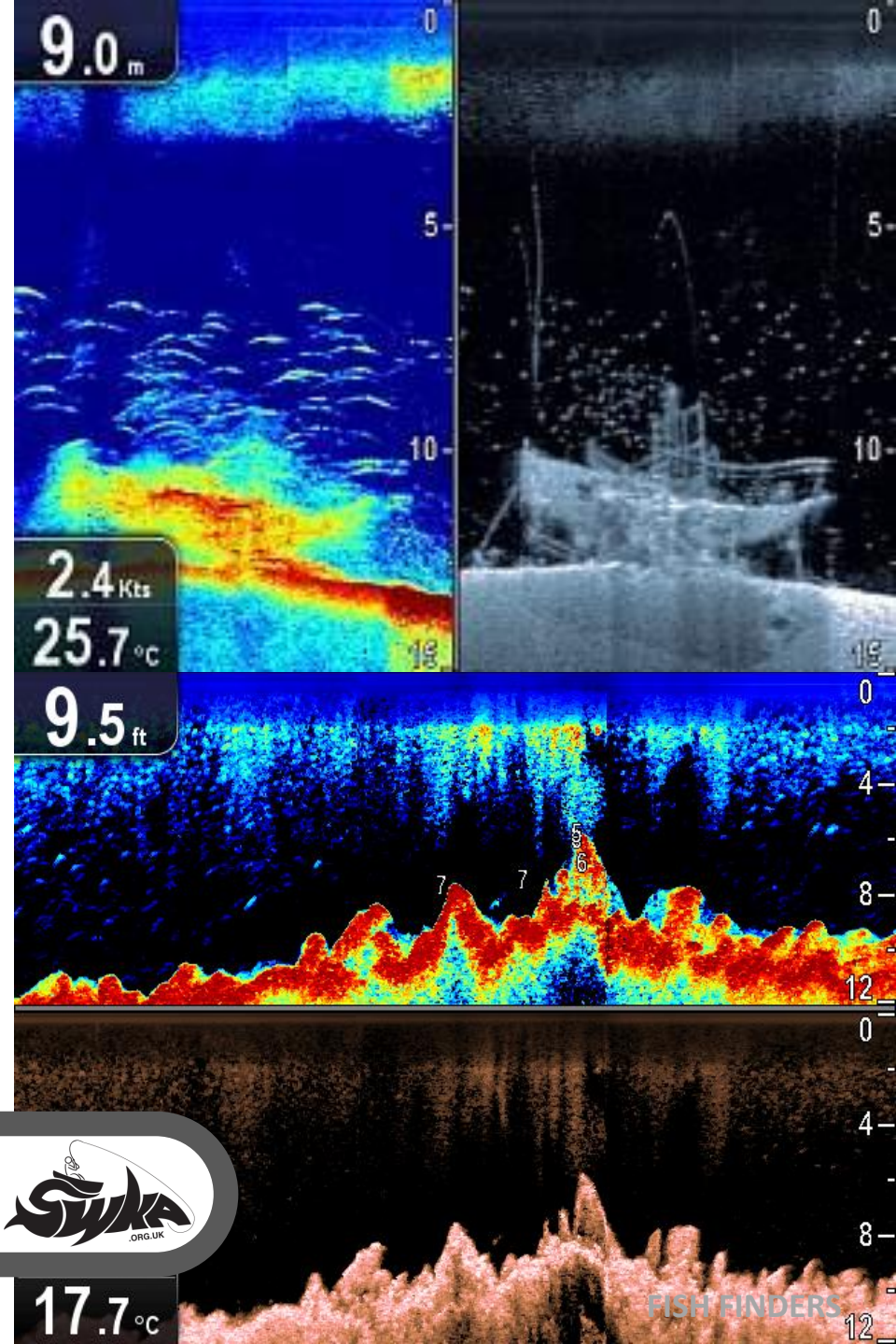


Using the spilt screen function – Selecting the spilt screen function allows you to see the best of both options.

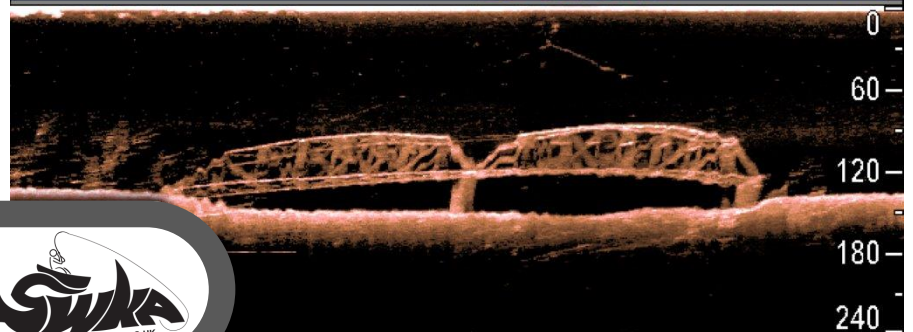
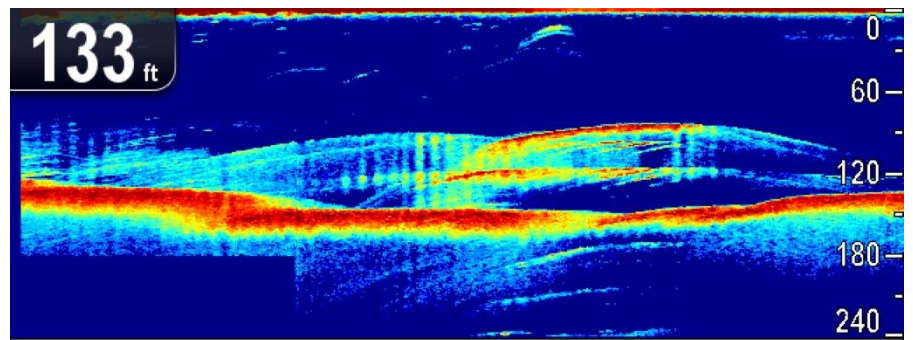
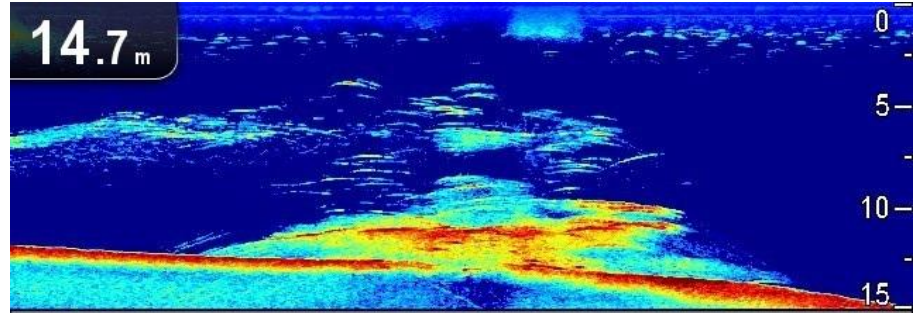
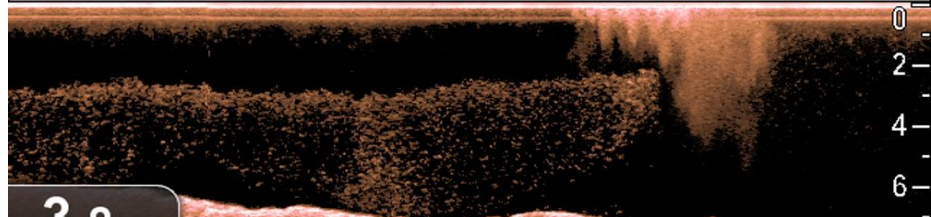
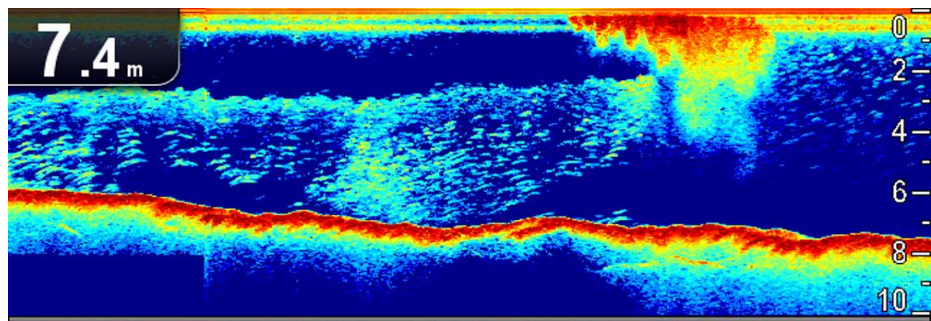
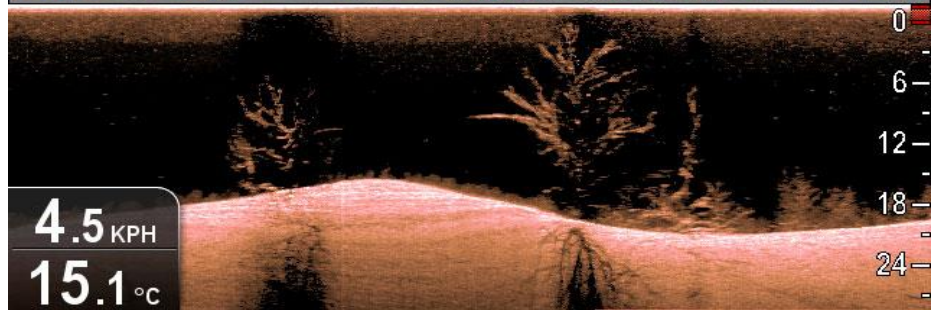
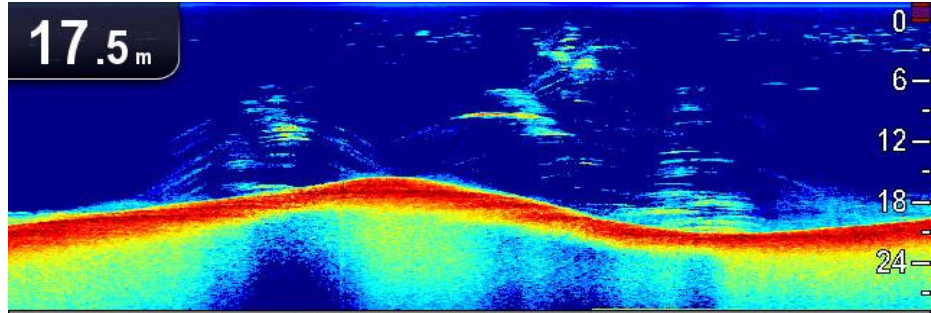
As can be seen in both these images the advantages of both are obvious.

Whilst visible on both the fish target are much more clearly seen on the Sonar screen. Makes it much easier to see them when using your FF on a sunny day.

The seabed and structure likewise are much clearer when using DownVision. In the top image you can see there is a structure and you could guess what it is. With the DownVision it becomes very clear that it is a shipwreck.



Sonar v DownVision



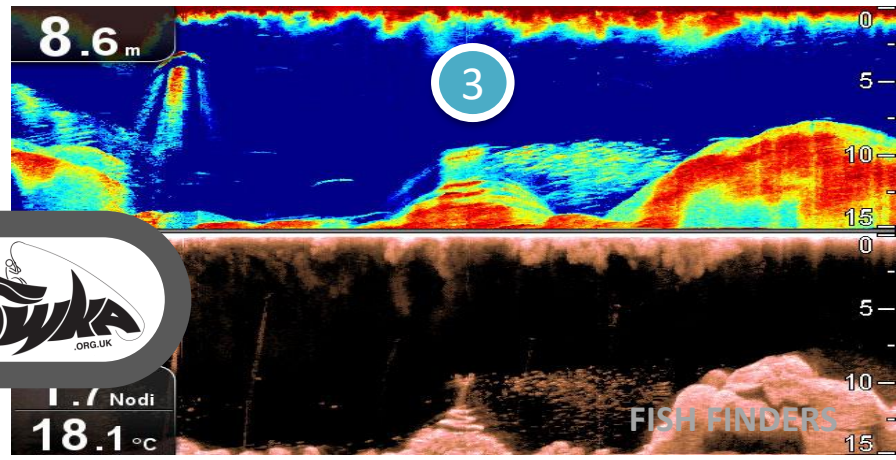
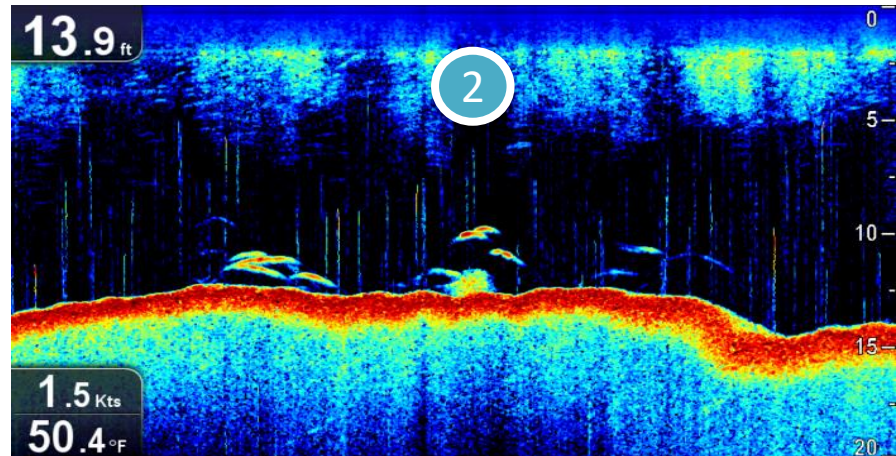
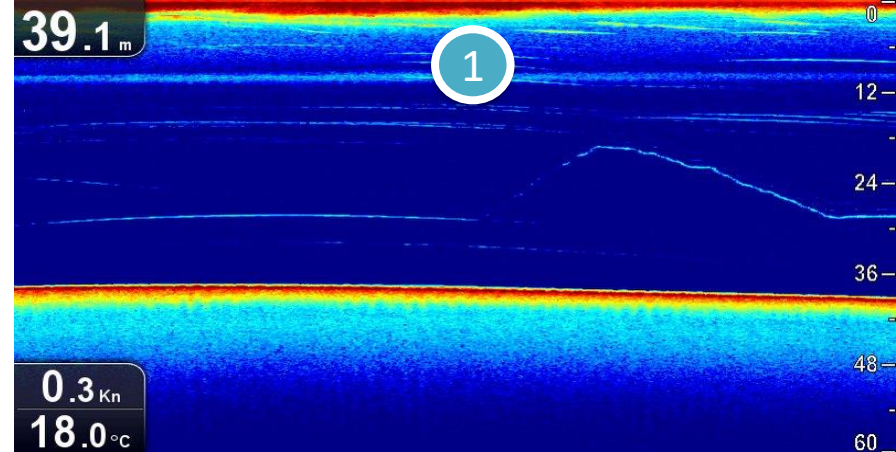
Further examples



The Sea Bed - These 3 images show some typical results for varying sea beds

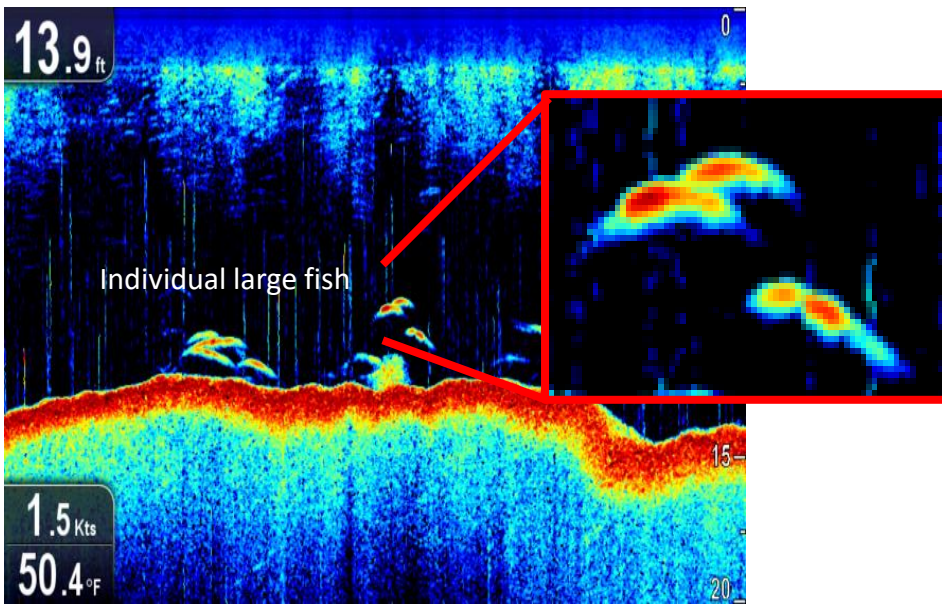
- 1 A typical hard bottom, usually sand, produces a hard edged thin line the with red and yellow display is in a tight line. A common site when fishing off beaches, particularly in West Wales where there can be huge expanses of sand.
- 2 A typical soft bottom, generally mud or layered vegetation, produces a wide line and a much thicker band of red and yellow. A common site when fishing in South Wales, in and around the Bristol Channel
- 3 A typical rocky or uneven bottom, a combination of rocks, sand and mud, produces a irregular image with peaks and troughs. Using DownVision in this case give you a much better idea of what's going on.

As a general rule the darker and more solid the colour the better the Sonar Echo ie harder target. The lighter the colour means the sonar has been able to pass through it ie soft target.



What am I looking at?

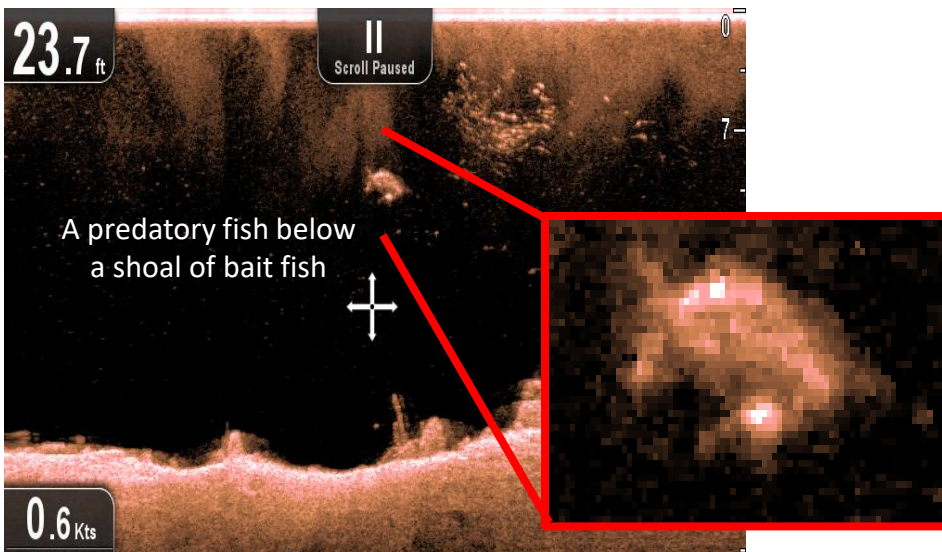




Don't expect to see a fish shape

When using sonar a fish shows up as tick shape or a 'fish arch' as per this image.

Typically what you are seeing is not the fish itself but its swim bladder. Air doesn't transmit sounds as well as water so the swim bladder is the fishes give away. As such the dark red image is the swim bladder with the lighter colour surrounding it the soft tissue of the fish.

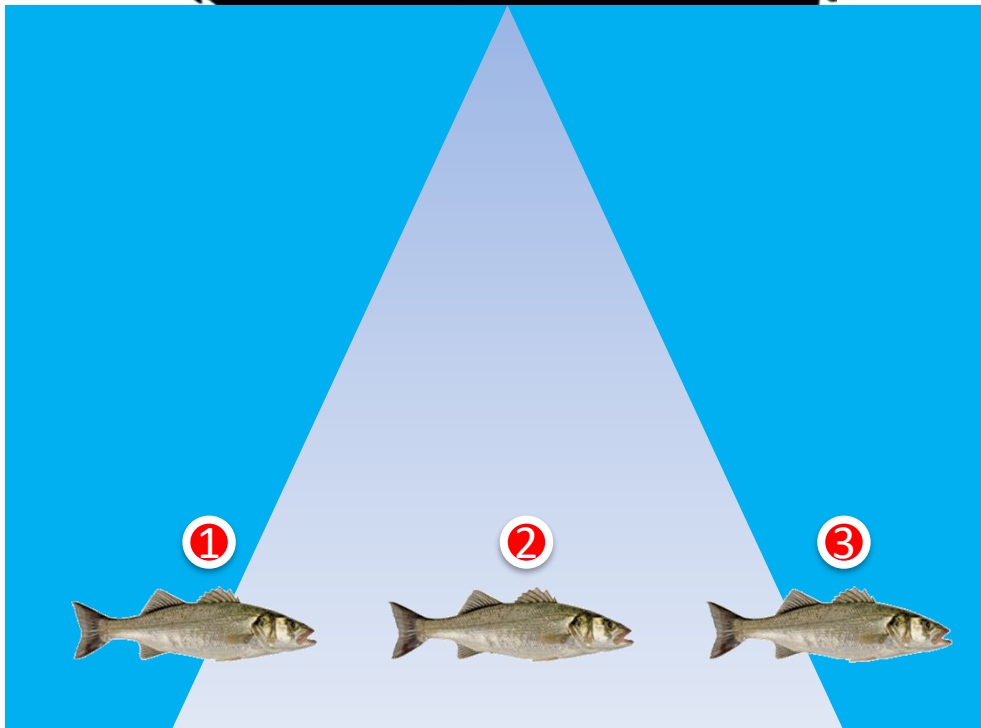


On occasion, via DownVision, you may be lucky enough to get an image like this. Especially if the fish is slow moving or stationary. In this image you can clearly see the body shape and tail – the benefit of higher frequency.

What does a fish look like?



The Fish Arch explained



1

When a fish enters the sonar beam the return on the screen is shown as a small increasing signal

2

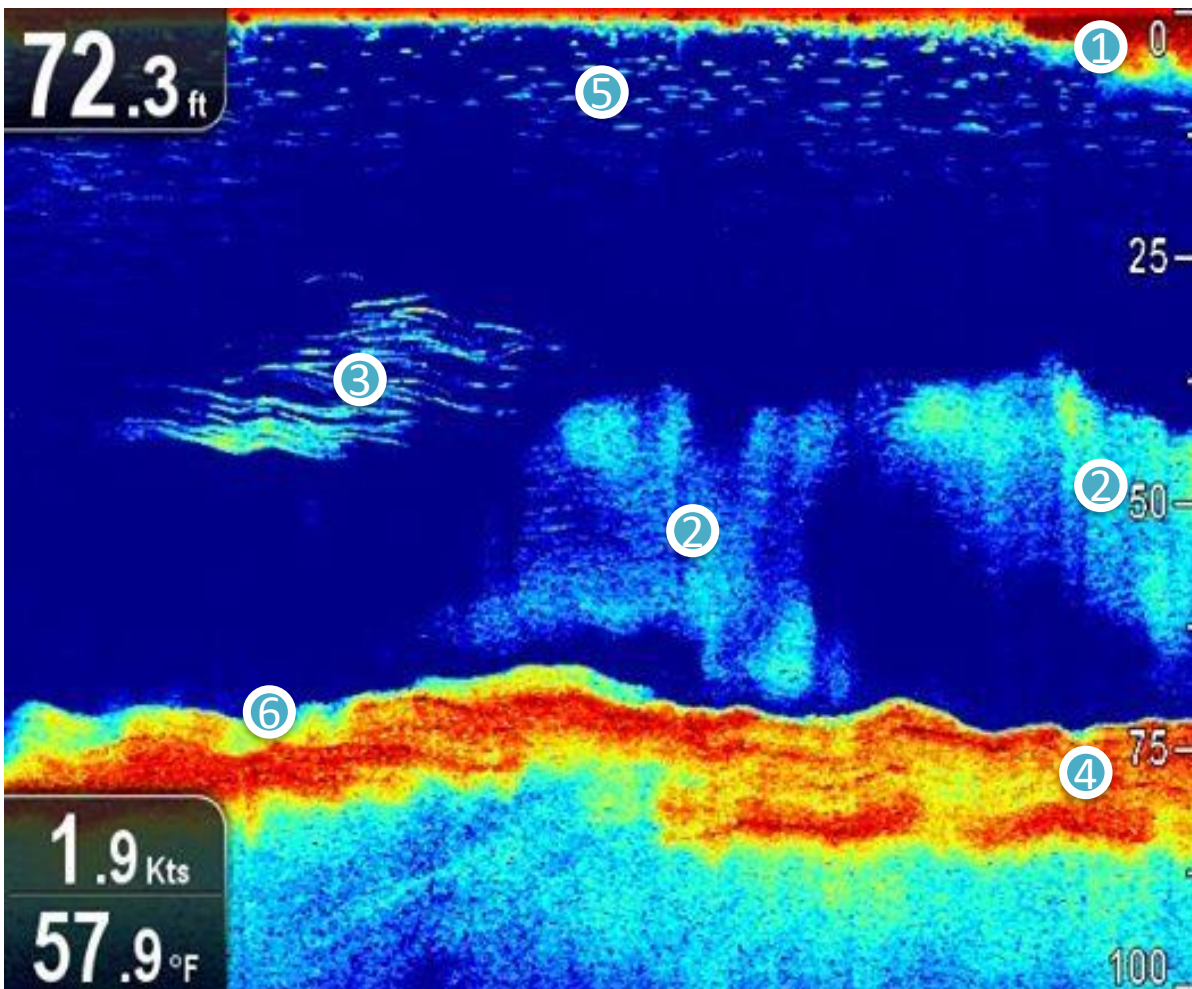
As the fish near the centre of the beam the strongest signal is received, the arch is at its largest

3

As the fish leaves the beam the return once again decreases, leaving the signature arch on your screen

The Fish Arch



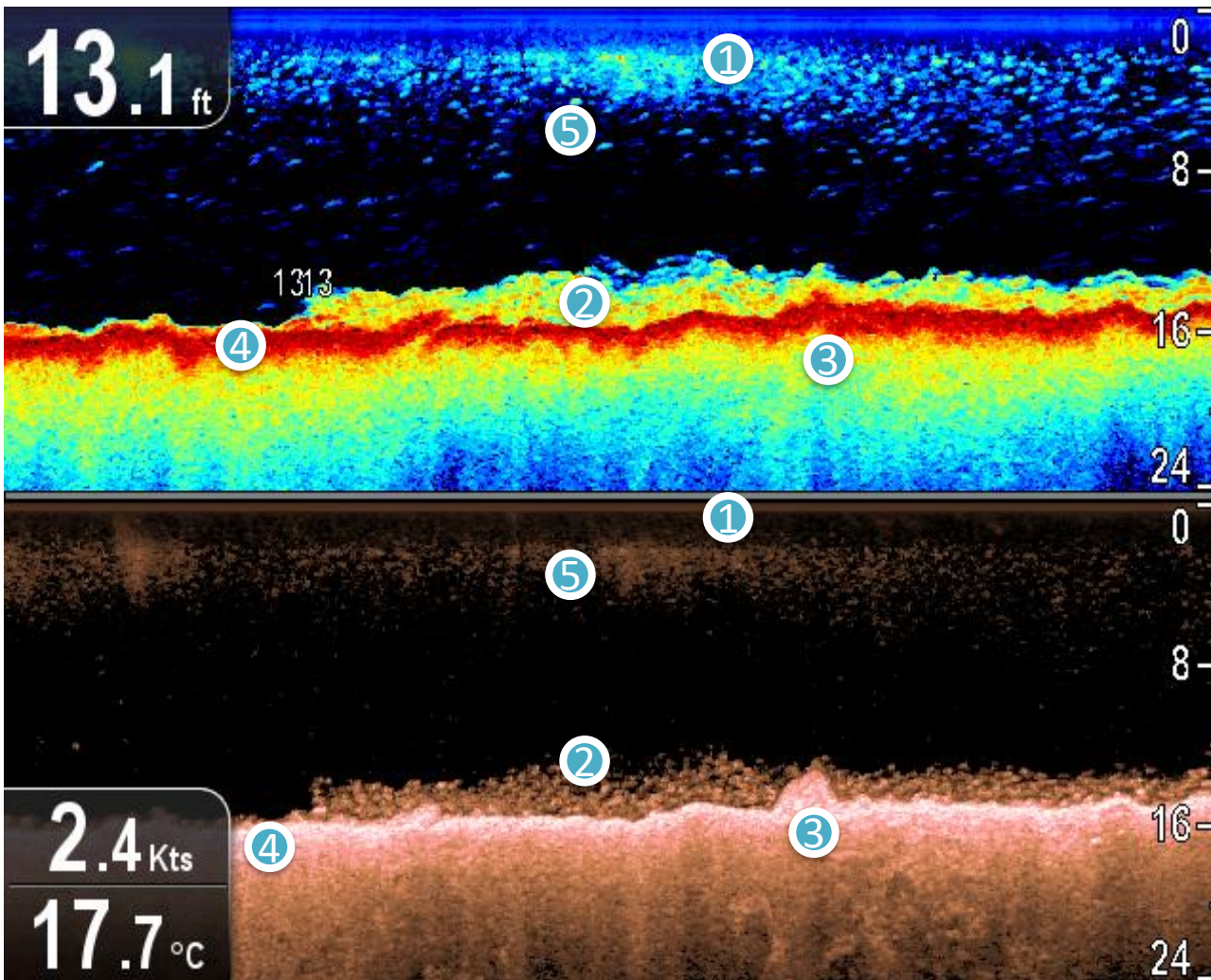


- 1 Surface interference**
Turbulence, air bubbles etc
- 2 Bait fish shoal**
small targets, light return
- 3 Multiple larger fish**
15+ targets, some yellow - red
- 4 Sea bed structure**
some hard features, thick orange red band so generally a soft sea bed
- 5 Debris in the surface water**
organic matter or flotsam
- 6 Seaweed**
bed of seaweed, c2m in height

Note: if you are fishing in a swell this can affect the image of the sea bed. A flat sea bed can look to be rippled due to the varying depth.

Understanding the image





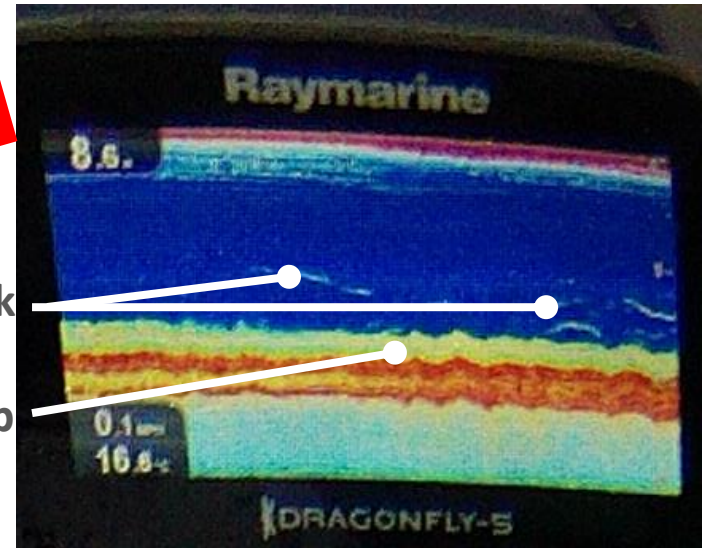
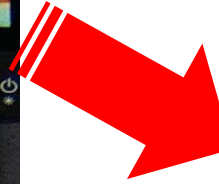
- 1 Surface interference**
Turbulence, air bubbles etc
- 2 Bait fish shoal**
easy to see individual targets
- 3 Large Rock**
Feature that attracts fish
- 4 Sea bed**
a soft sea bed
- 5 Debris in the surface water**
organic matter or flotsam

Understanding the image





Targeted fishing



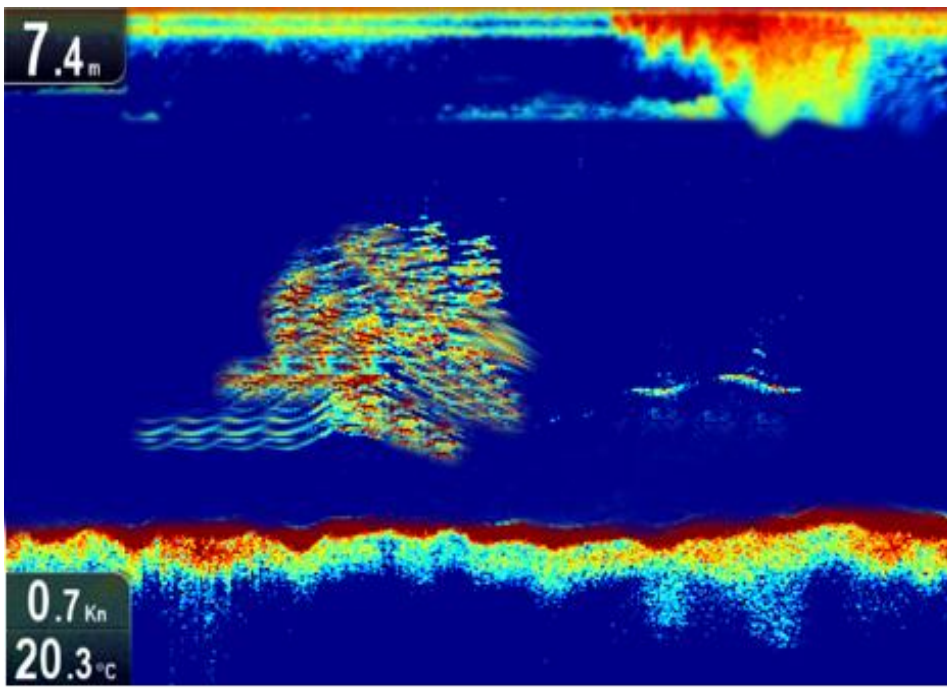
Pollock

Kelp

On this trip the target was Pollock, fishing over kelp beds. You can see the sea bed and that there was roughly 1.5m of kelp, starting at a depth of 6.5m. Using this information I was able to control the depth of my lure, jigging it just above the kelp. You could see when a Pollock took an interest and came out of the kelp and respond as such. Other major benefit is keeping snags, or lost gear, to a minimum.

Target your species - Pollock





Targeted fishing

Images like these are quite a common site. They show a ball of bait fish and several further targets off to the right.

In this case the bait fish are Mackerel and the larger targets to the right are Bass following the shoal.

Using the information feathers can be used to catch the mackerel, then the mackerel used as a live bait to target the Bass.

That is exactly how this bass was caught, taken with a floated live bait on the fringes of the shoal.

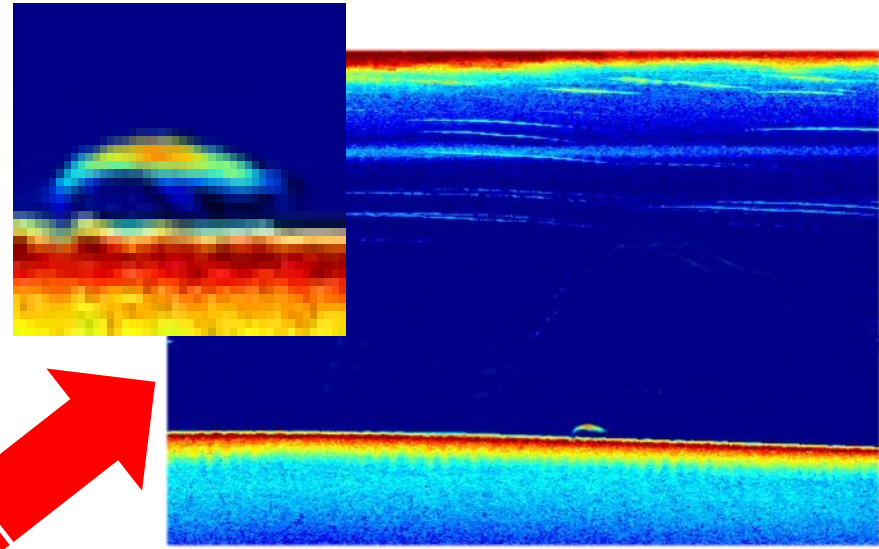


Target your species - Bass





Targeted fishing



This is the actual screenshot of this Smooth Hound. As can be seen the sea bed was smooth sand. The Smooth-hound can be clearly seen just off the sea bed. A running ledger with squid was dropped down and the fish was in the Kayak 2 minutes later. On a sea bed like this the zoom feature is beneficial to determine targets that are on or just off the bottom, especially for flat fish.

Target your species - Hound

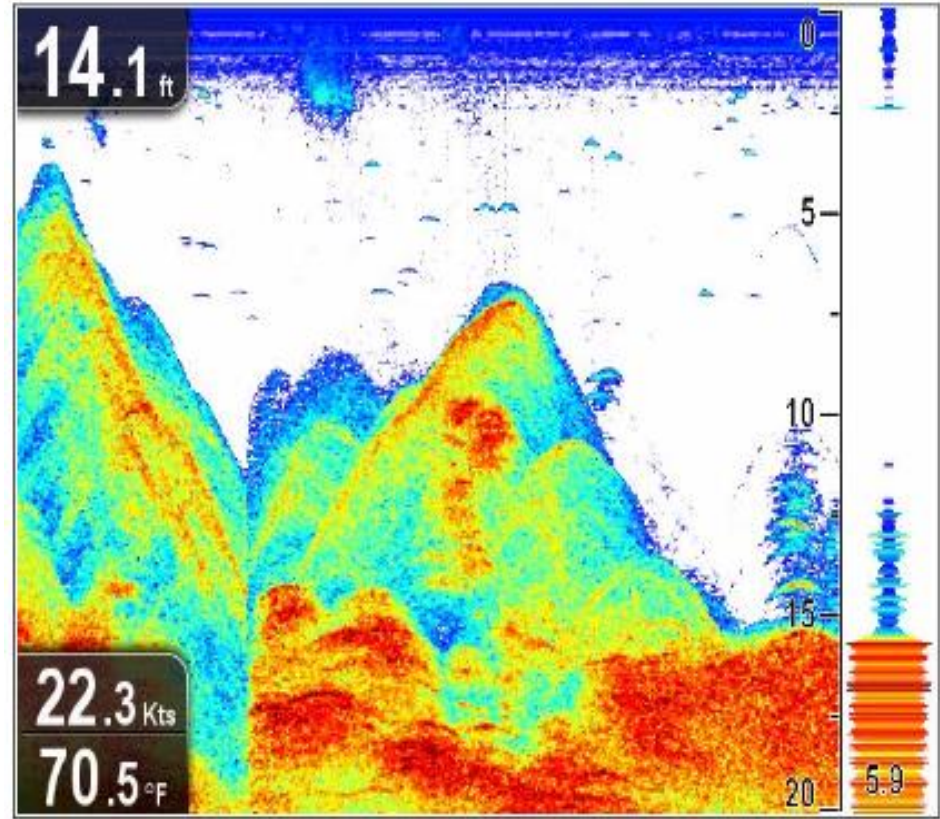


A-Scope Feature

Dragonfly FF's have a feature called A-Scope, this is a very useful feature when looking for activity in the water column.

A-Scope is available in the Sonar application only. This feature changes the screen to a split screen mode – the standard scrolling view alongside a 'live' image of the water directly beneath your kayak.

A-Scope proves a precise and easy to see indication of what is happening direct under kayak. Whilst the standard view builds slowly as it scrolls across the screen the A-Scope shows you instantly any targets and the strength of the target.

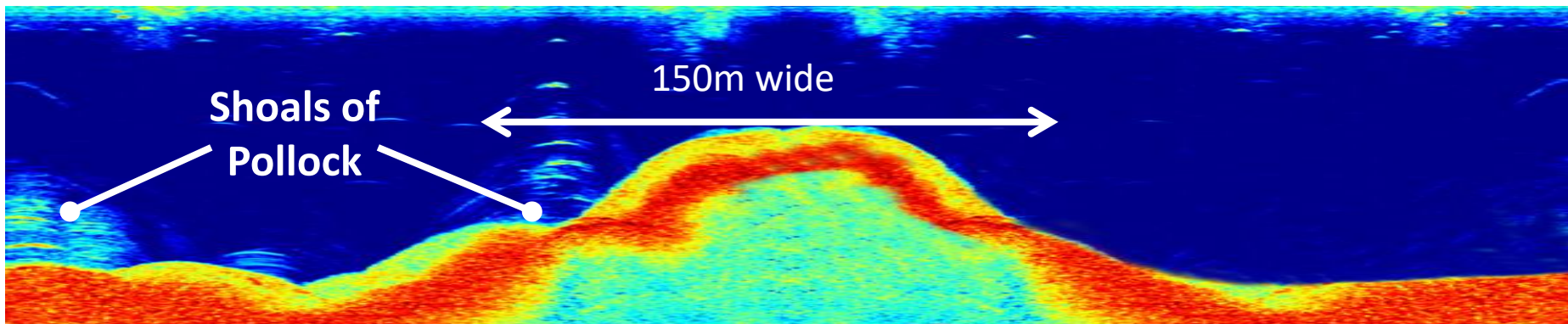


Standard
view

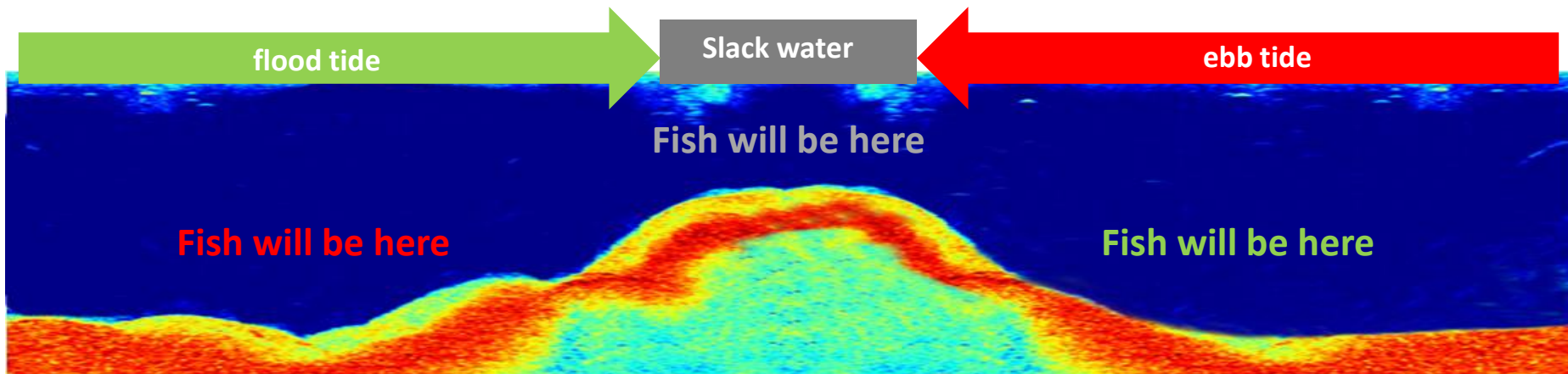
A-Scope
view

Try using A-Scope





If you have located a large feature, ie a reef, particularly if its large. Then not only can you use your FF to repeatedly find that feature on multiple drifts or even separate trips, you can use your FF to locate the fish around that feature. The image above is of an offshore reef, some 150m across. It can be quite hard to locate the fish over such a large area. To make finding them easier you need to combine your knowledge of the feature from your FF and the tides. As a rule of thumb the fish are more likely to be on the opposing side of the feature than the way the tide is running. Most of the time shoal fish like to congregate on the downward side.



Find the feature, find the fish

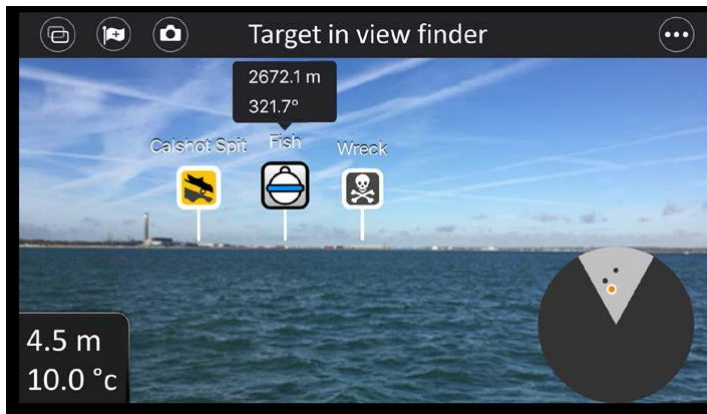
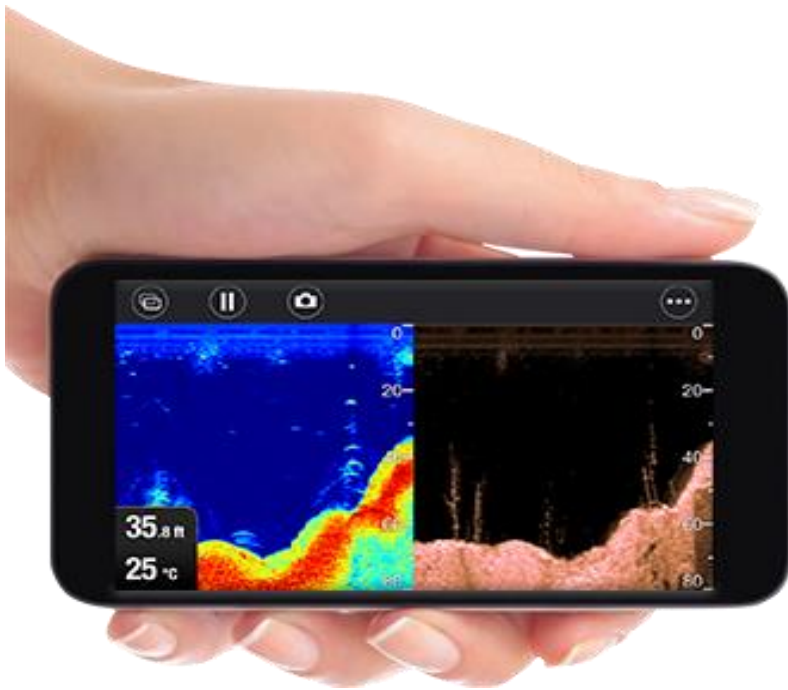


Dragonfly Pro's can be used with the Wi-Fish app, adding yet more flexibility and options.

By downloading the Wi-Fish App you can connect your smartphone or tablet to your FF, allowing you to stream sonar data.

With the app you can record and even rewind your sonar streams, as well as capture and share any images easily. Great for sharing images on the SWKA forum!

With the latest release you can even use augmented reality to show you visually, via your smartphone, where your key waypoints are on even where you caught that last fish.



The Wi-Fish mobile app





The information contained in this document is intended only as a guide. SWKA accepts no responsibility or liability for any injury, loss or damage direct or in-direct arising from the use of information contained herein. Readers hereby acknowledge that the use of information contained in this guide is done so at their own risk.



All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be copied, transmitted or published in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including in social media, without permission in writing from the author.

© Copyright 2020 SWKA